UNITED
NATIONS

Convention to Combat
Desertification

Distr.
GENERAL

ICCD/COP(4)/5
15 November 2000

ENGLISH
Original: FRENCH

CONFERENCE OF THE PARTIES
Fourth session
Bonn, 11-22 December 2000
Item 8 (c) of the provisional agenda*

COMMITTEE ON SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

MAINTENANCE OF THE ROSTER OF EXPERTS

Note by the secretariat

1. As stated in paragraph 2 of article 24 of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification, "the Conference of the Parties shall establish and maintain a roster of independent experts with expertise and experience in the relevant fields. The roster shall be based on nominations received in writing from the Parties, taking into account the need for a multidisciplinary approach and broad geographical representation."

2. By its decisions 18/COP.1, 13/COP.2 and 15/COP.3, the Conference of the Parties decided to establish and maintain a roster of independent experts, in accordance with the procedures attached to decision 18/COP.1.

3. In accordance with the provisions of paragraph 2 of article 24 of the Convention and decision 18/COP.1, the selection of experts to be included on the roster shall be based on nominations communicated by the Parties in writing and through diplomatic channels, taking into account the need for a multidisciplinary approach, an appropriate gender balance and broad and equitable geographical representation and the need for nominees to have expertise and experience in fields relevant to combating desertification and mitigating the effects of drought.

* ICCD/COP(4)/1.

Pursuant to decision 18/COP.1, the roster of experts should also reflect the diversity of knowledge and skills needed to provide advice on combating desertification and mitigating the effects of drought, taking into account the integrated approach of the Convention and the need to include experts from grass-roots organizations and non-governmental organizations.

4. The Conference of the Parties requested the secretariat to inform the Committee on Science and Technology at its fourth session concerning the use that had been made of the roster.

5. The Conference of the Parties also requested the secretariat to ensure that an updated roster was made available in electronic form, as well as through the regular channels of the United Nations system, for the purpose of facilitating the exchange of information.

6. In decision 15/COP.3, the secretariat invited Parties to supplement their submissions to the secretariat for inclusion in the roster, by 30 June 2000, to ensure that under-represented areas were addressed, in particular, by:

(a) Making the roster more balanced in terms of gender; and

(b) Ensuring better representation of all relevant disciplines.

7. By that same decision, the Conference of the Parties invited Parties to report to the secretariat before 30 June 2000 on the use that they had made of the roster.

8. The roster, containing nominations received by 7 September 2000, is contained in annex I to document ICCD/COP(4)/5/Add.1. Revisions and updates sent to the secretariat through diplomatic channels by 15 October 2000 will be posted on the Convention's Internet site, as provided below. These revisions, as well as any subsequent revisions and amendments, will be taken into account in future editions of the roster.

9. In order to prepare the list of nominations, the secretariat has developed a curriculum vitae form and has taken due account of the illustrative list of disciplines annexed to decision 15/COP.3 and as amended in annex II to document ICCD/COP(4)/5/Add.1. Annex I to that document contains a summary of the following information: countries submitting nominations, name and sex of candidates, institutes from which they come, and main fields of experience or expertise. An illustrative list of the disciplines is contained in annex III and the general features of the roster are summarized in annex IV of the same document.

10. The following broad observations may be made about the roster:

(a) The total number of experts included is 1,510;

(b) Nominations have been provided by 71 Parties;

(c) Of these 71 Parties, 29 have submitted more than 20 nominations each. These are the following countries: Algeria, Armenia, Brazil, Burkina Faso, Chile, China, Cuba, Dominican Republic, Egypt, France, Germany, Ghana, India, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Israel, Italy, Jordan, Mali, Mexico, Morocco, Niger, Nigeria, Pakistan, Peru, Saudi Arabia, Senegal, Spain, Turkey and Zimbabwe;

(d) The following disciplines are not sufficiently represented (less than 2 per cent): agriculture, anthropology and sociology, education, health sciences, physical science and others;

(e) There are 1,297 male and 213 female candidates, representing, respectively, 86 per cent and 14 per cent of the included experts.

11. The secretariat has, accordingly, posted an updated version of the roster on its Internet site at the address: http://www.unccd.int, which has its own search engine. The secretariat has also prepared a CD-ROM for Parties that have no Internet access or have problems accessing this site.

12. In response to the request mentioned in paragraph 4 above, the roster was consulted 633 times between 20 October 1999 and 30 June 2000. Users included national institutions, universities, international organizations, research centres and radio and television stations.

13. Bearing in mind the relevant provisions of the Convention and the procedures to be followed in establishing and maintaining the roster of independent experts, the Conference of the Parties might wish to study recommendations which the Committee on Science and Technology might make regarding the further development of the roster, including any instructions which it might give the secretariat with a view to ensuring that the roster is more balanced in terms of its geographical representation, representation of disciplines and in terms of gender. The Committee might also wish to reflect on the most cost-effective ways of continuously updating the roster. One possible solution might be, for example, to give each mission a password and an account for accessing the roster of independent experts.